



USAID | **GEORGIA**
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

EDUCATION MANAGEMENT PROJECT

YEAR 1 ANNUAL REPORT

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADDIE	
BOT	Board of trustees
CTC	Center for Training and Consultancy
EMIS	Education management information system
EMP	Georgia Education Management Project
ERC	Education Resource Center
ISU	Ilia State University
IT	Information technology
GoG	Government of Georgia
MoES	Ministry of Education and Science
MOU	Memorandum of understanding
SCEG	School Civic Engagement Grants Program
SIS	Student Information System
TOT	Training of trainers
TPDC	Teacher Professional Development Center
UCLA	University of California at Los Angeles
UNDP	United Nations Development Program

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

USAID's Georgia Education Management Project (EMP) is a three-year program designed to build management capacity in the education sector by establishing an education management program for administrators supported by necessary financial and administrative policy reforms. It has two objectives: (1) improving the long-term institutional capacity of Georgia to better manage the education system and lead its transformation; and (2) ensuring the effectiveness of education policies on management, finance, and accreditation¹ through support to the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES), MoES educational agencies, and Education Resource Centers (ERCs). More specifically, under its first objective, the project aims to

- Establish a master's of education administration at Ilia State University (ISU),
- Create in-service training for education administrators (e.g., school principals),
- Develop continuing education for ERC staff to strengthen their ability to manage human and financial resources to improve education at the regional level, and
- Support master's students to write theses tied to problems faced by active education leaders and administrators.

Under its second objective, the project's goals are to

- Help the MoES develop a school financing scheme that provides for equitable (though not necessarily equal funding) for all Georgian children,
- Support Georgia's decentralization process by empowering ERCs to more effectively support schools and ensuring school principals understand and have the skills to meet the Ministry's expectations for their performance,
- Develop an Education Management Information System (EMIS) capable of collecting and analyzing data to enable the MoES to make data-driven decisions, and
- Increase non-school actors' access to information about schools and ability to impact the quality of education in their communities.

This report describes EMP's first year of implementation. During this year, EMP saw an across-the-board change in staff at the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES), the end of project work on accreditation (the project received a stop work order in June from the Regional Contracting Office), and notable adjustments in EMP's approach to several objectives (to align with the specific priorities of the incumbent Minister). However, despite this background of change, the project team — lead by USAID — made steady progress towards its expected results.

Key Challenges and Achievements of the Project's First Year

Navigating changes at the Ministry of Education and Science. In December 2009, Minister Dimitri Shashkin and his staff replaced the previous administration at the MoES. This change brought both challenges and opportunities for the project. These changes meant that EMP staff had to build working relationships with an entire new MoES cohort and ensure their understanding and buy-in to ongoing EMP initiatives.

¹ EMP has received a stop-work order on all accreditation work.

Fortunately, the new Ministry staff were very focused on finding the best way to implement solutions in the areas — school finance, data-based decision-making, the role of ERCs — in which EMP was working.

Launching the M.Ed. program in record time. Due to various circumstances affecting the timing of contract award, EMP was awarded in early June, when Ilia State University was closing for the summer. As a result, the project team had only six months when to help ISU get its master's in education administration planned and launched; however, the university was only in session for only three of those months and the M.Ed program director was not hired until the middle of the summer. To achieve this ambitious goal, EMP staff took a flexible, accelerated approach to developing M.Ed. courses and training M.Ed. instructors. EMP also successfully publicized the new program, which resulted in a final total of 24 full-time students participating in its first cohort. All 24 students received an MoES voucher for post-graduate studies and began their M.Ed. studies on November 20, 2009.

Promoting performance standards for principals. As the year progressed, EMP assessments and MoES experience demonstrated that principal performance was a real area of concern for the management of the entire education system. While EMP had planned some activities to help train principals, it became clear that those activities needed to expand to include developing principal performance standards and a nascent performance/accountability system, as this was a significant need within Georgia's education system. The Ministry (more precisely the Teachers Professional Development Center, or TPDC) has requested that EMP help develop principal standards and the accountability system. This work will support EMP's current work on improving decentralized education management and ERC policy reform.

Meeting the ministry half way regarding EMIS development. While EMP's design was grounded in a long-term strategic view of developing a data collection and analysis system, the MoES made substantive arguments that its immediate data needs are vital and cannot be postponed until the development of a student information system (SIS) or other sophisticated EMIS models. Therefore, with USAID support, EMP has worked with the MoES to develop a basic database portfolio that will allow the Ministry to collect and analyze critical information this fall while the SIS is being developed.

Systematically collecting financial data to ensure sound revision and maintenance of the school financing formula. As a part of EMP's research into school finance, the project team soon found that little financial data had been collected in a manner that allowed adequate analysis for developing a new formula. EMP staff quickly recognized that action was needed to address this issue for the future to ensure that any new formula would not remain static. When the Ministry requested assistance in developing their basic database portfolio, EMP requested that they include in the portfolio a very simple school expenditure and budget tool that will allow the Ministry to gather data and analyze it to (1) make appropriate future funding adjustments and (2) better manage schools that have funding problems.

Supporting decentralization. In early 2010, the project team conducted an assessment of the performance of ERCs, the results of which are expected to drive remaining project work with these regional bodies. It will also influence other aspects of

implementation, such as work with funding formulas, principal standards, and numerous capacity building efforts across the Ministry. At the beginning of Year 2, project staff will present these findings to the MoES and engage Ministry staff to more fully understand their vision for future reforms.

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

This report is divided into two sections: an introduction and a description of project accomplishments by input. Project staff would like to express their gratitude for the continued support of USAID's technical office, Ilia State University staff, and representatives from the Ministry of Education and Science. All of these partnerships have been critical to continued successful implementation.

Project Overview

In 2005, Georgia passed a new Law on General Education that promoted sweeping reforms in the way schools were run and decentralized many functions from the center out to schools. Under this law, schools are established as independent legal, public entities responsible for many administrative functions formerly housed at the MoES or local education departments. In this model of decentralization, in which schools manage themselves autonomously, each school is governed by a board of trustees (BoT) — composed of teachers, parents, high-school students, and a representative from the local government — that is responsible for authorizing financial expenditures and local implementation of the national curriculum. The 2005 law also abolished local government education departments, replacing them with local Education Resource Centers (ERCs) that serve an average of 25 schools and are ostensibly responsible for collecting data, organizing training and workshops for school staff, and overseeing the election process for school boards.

Through its implementation of this law, Georgia has made great strides in putting education into the hands of local educators and parents, while keeping quality control over educational institutions in the hands of the Ministry. However, the rapid pace of reform has led to both successes and challenges in managing a decentralized system at the national, district, and local levels and, at times, to the de facto recentralization of certain management authority. The EMP project is designed to build management capacity in the education sector to continue those successes and address those challenges. The project has two objectives.

First, to realize the goals of this ambitious decentralization plan, Georgian education administrators outside of the central Ministry — i.e., school principals, leaders of the ERCs, etc. — needed to take on new responsibilities that required they learn more robust and autonomous management skills. By helping Georgians establish a master's of education administration program as well as in-service training for active administrators, EMP is improving the long-term institutional capacity of Georgians to better manage the education system and lead its transformation.

Second, for schools across Georgia to flourish under the country's school-autonomy decentralization scheme, they need at least four elements: (1) a funding formula that provides equitable education to all Georgian students given each community's particular circumstances (i.e., dense or sparse population; rural, urban, or mountain location, etc.), (2) ERCs that are empowered to support schools effectively yet not overburdened with other responsibilities, and principals that understand and have the skills to meet Ministry expectations of their performance, (3) a way to effectively collect and communicate information about school performance (student, financial, scholastic, etc.) so that the MoES can make data-driven decisions about how to

promote education quality throughout the system, and (4) effective ways for communities to engage with their schools and boards of trustees to ensure they can both help promote as well as shape high-quality education for their children. To achieve these goals, EMP works to ensure the effectiveness of education policies on management, finance, and community participation through support to the MoES, MoES educational agencies, and ERCs. The project's logical framework is included below.

Exhibit 1. Georgia Education Management Program Logical Framework	
IMPACT: Improved quality of social services	
OUTCOME: Management capacity exists within the government to ensure provision of quality services	
Output 1: Education workforce skills developed	Input 1.1: Master's of education administration program established at ICU
	Input 1.2: Short courses in education administration developed for education professionals
	Input 1.3: Short courses developed for ERCs that increase their capacity in resource management and administration
	Input 1.4: Research program established in Education Administration Master's Degree program that focuses on MoES priorities
Output 2: Regulatory and policy environment strengthened	Input 2.1: School financial capacity strengthened
	Input 2.2: Decentralized management systems empowered through greater responsibilities of ERCs and/or other regional-level education units of the GoG in education planning and management
	Input 2.3: EMIS further developed to provide data for decision makers
	Input 2.4: Accreditation standards developed
	Input 2.5: System established for increased dialogue between MoES and non-school actors regarding reforms and quality of education

SECTION II: ACCOMPLISHMENTS BY PROJECT COMPONENT

During its first year, in collaboration with USAID and local counterparts, EMP made significant progress on all inputs (described below) included in its first-year work plan.

Output 1: Education Workforce Skills Developed

To help Georgian education administrators fulfill their responsibilities in Georgia's decentralized system, USAID's EMP project is supporting the creation of several education and training programs targeted to meet the varying needs of education administrators. EMP is helping Ilia State University establish a master's in education administration degree program (whose thesis research will be tied to needs of practicing education managers), working with the Ministry and the Teacher Professional Development Center (TPDC) to develop relevant and practical training for school principals, and working with the MoES to design appropriate training for ERC staff.

Input 1.1: Master's of education administration established at ISU

As mentioned above, the project team faced a challenging timeline to help ISU get their M.Ed. Administration program up and running. However, under USAID's leadership, ISU counterparts, EMP staff, and subcontractor UCLA successfully organized the first- and second-semester courses in record time and started the semester on time.

Exhibit 2. First Two Semesters of Courses in ISU's M.Ed. Program					
Term	Practicum Internship	Research	Social and Political Context	Professional Courses	
I	Field Experience: Observation and Participation <i>Ketie Todadze (Rita Flynn)</i>	Basic Research Skills <i>Lela Chakhaia (Val Rust)</i>	Structure of the Georgian Educational System <i>Tamar Bregvadze</i>	Theories of Curriculum and Instruction <i>Giorgi Zedginidze (Barbara Knight)</i>	Introduction to Management and Organizational Behavior <i>Maia Bitsadze (Robert Cooper)</i>
II	Field Experience: Observation and Participation <i>Ketie Todadze (Rita Flynn)</i>	Research in the Social Sciences <i>Natia Andguladze (Val Rust)</i>	Education in a Diverse Society <i>George Gakheladze (Robert Cooper)</i>	Organizational Leadership <i>Maia Bitsadze (Robert Cooper)</i>	Operations Management <i>Berika Shukakidze (Rita Flynn)</i>
III	Field Experience: Observation with a Specific Operations <i>Ketie Todadze (Rita Flynn)</i>	Preparation for Master's Degree Action Research <i>Natia Andguladze (Val Rust, Buzz Wilms)</i>	Social Foundations of Education <i>Simon Janashia (Tyrone Howard)</i>	Legal and Financial Issues in Education <i>Berika Shukakidze (Stuart Biegel)</i>	Management of Teaching and Learning <i>Marina Japaridze (Rita Flynn)</i>

IV	Field Experience Observation with a Specific Operations Focus <i>Ketie Todadze (Rita Flynn)</i>	Action Research Thesis <i>Natia Andguladze (Buzz Wilms)</i>	Politics of Education <i>Lela Chakhaia (Carlos Torres)</i>	Effective Communication	Specialization Elective
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Designing curriculum. Following UCLA's rapid assessment of the resources available at ISU (human, financial, and material) to implement the program, UCLA and ISU professors agreed to structure the M.Ed. curriculum around four major components: (1) practical work through internships, (2) action research culminating in a master's thesis, (3) education in its social-political context, and (4) professional courses. Each of these four components runs through all four semesters of the program. Further, ISU and UCLA agreed to use a cohort model for the program in order to support the development of relationships among participants and to start the program in an expedited fashion. Below, we list the four semesters of the M.Ed. curriculum, which will enable future school administrators to acquire the management skills they will need to improve administration and education quality within their institutions.

Developing syllabi and course materials. Once course topics were identified, ISU faculty — with support from UCLA professors — developed and finalized course syllabi. The team from UCLA helped ISU professors determine weekly topics appropriate to the Georgian context, which were included in the final syllabi of M.Ed. courses. These course syllabi are available at <https://sites.google.com/a/iliauni.edu.ge/gem/>, a website specifically created for M.Ed. students and teachers. In total, EMP helped ISU professors develop 10 M.Ed. courses (five for the first semester and five for the second semester), and has begun development of third- and fourth-semester classes.

Average Student Approval Rating of First-Semester Courses

Courses:	9.27
Professors:	9.02
("10" is the highest possible rating)	

In collaboration with UCLA and EMP staff, ISU professors also identified the foundational reading list for each course. Originally, the EMP project had planned to do only limited translation, because it was expected that other entities were engaged in translating texts that met the needs of M.Ed. students. However, when it turned out that EMP would not have the texts it needed unless it translated them, the project reevaluated its budget and found a way to fund the translation of necessary readings. Over the course of Year 1, EMP translated more than 700 pages of relevant academic materials, which were not originally available in Georgian, and compiled them into course readers. The project has also begun the translation of nine foundational texts (listed below), which will be available to students in the project's Year 2. Course readers are currently available online at the M.Ed. website and copies are also available at ISU's library.

Exhibit 3. Foundational Texts for ISU's M.Ed. Administration Course

- Louis Cohen, Lawrence Manion, and Keith Morrison. *Research Methods in Education*, 6th edition. New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2007.

Exhibit 3. Foundational Texts for ISU's M.Ed. Administration Course	
•	Kate Turabian and Wayne Booth. <i>A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers</i> , 7th edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.
•	Wayne Hoy and Cecil Miskel, C. <i>Educational Administration: Theory, Research and Practice</i> . New York: McGraw-Hill, 2001.
•	Robert G.Owens, Thomas C. Valesky. <i>Organizational Behavior in Education: Adaptive Leadership and School Reform</i> , 10th edition. Prentice Hall, 2010.
•	Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal. <i>Reframing Organizations</i> , 4th edition. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008.
•	Peter G. Northouse. <i>Leadership Theory and Practice</i> , 4th edition. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2007.
•	Carlos Torres, Education, <i>Democracy and Multiculturalism: Dilemmas of Citizenship in a Global World</i> . Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998.
•	Thomas J Sergiovanni. <i>The Principalship. A Reflective Practice Perspective</i> , 6th edition. Allyn & Bacon, 2008.
•	Gorton, Richard and Judy Alston. <i>School Leadership and Administration: Important Concepts, Case Studies, and Simulations</i> . McGraw-Hill,2008.

An innovation in Georgia, ISU's M.Ed. program introduces a practicum for students. This course spans four semesters and is designed to link students' theoretical knowledge to education management practice. The course, and its associated internship, helps students progressively develop administrative competence through a range of practical experiences at school sites, while also giving them the opportunity to reflect on foundational theories of leadership. During Year 1, EMP helped ISU establish relationships with 20 schools throughout Tbilisi as practicum sites for M.Ed. students' internships. ISU staff, supported by a UCLA consultant, held a seminar with school directors to ensure that they fully understand their role in this process and were prepared to partner with the M.Ed. program to effectively train the next generation of education managers. Next semester, the first cohort will begin conducting action research at partner local schools.

Reacting Flexibly to Overcome Emerging Challenges

EMP's midterm evaluation of ISU's first-semester classes identified challenges related to students' academic writing. To ensure that students are prepared to be effective leaders and administrators, they need to improve their ability to write clearly and persuasively. Therefore, EMP staff and ISU instructors began to focus on the quality of writing in course assignments, their approaches to teaching students proper writing techniques (including writing guidelines), and providing detailed feedback to individual students. In Year 2, EMP will continue to support professors in the development of students' writing skills, including developing a Georgian language writing style manual.

Recruiting students and the funding dilemma. To ensure students knew about the new M.Ed. program available at ISU, EMP staff also helped the university initiate a rapid marketing campaign ending on October 20, the deadline for submitting applications. The campaign included newspaper ads in popular weekly newspapers; announcements on the widely known and popular www.jobs.ge website; interactive radio interviews with ISU M.Ed. director Simon Janashia; a TV news story; a TV scrolling ad; and commercial ads five times a day for some two weeks. In addition, EMP staff printed and distributed 10,000 flyers around universities and other areas frequented by university students in Tbilisi. The result of these efforts was the

successful enrollment of 40 master's students. However, only those students (24) who were recipients of state sponsorships currently remain in the program; the other 16 left for various reasons, the predominant one being the inability to fund their education.

Given the challenge students face in funding their M.Ed. studies, EMP has taken a two-pronged approach to attracting the program's second cohort. First, as the

deadline for the second cohort of M.Ed. students will occur later this year, EMP and ISU staff have again undertaken an aggressive marketing campaign targeting both Tbilisi and the regions. This campaign targets both school principals and teachers through use of promotional materials/presentations, television ads, e-conferences between ISU and universities whose graduates might be interested in the M.Ed., and public lectures, among other tools. Second, an EMP consultant began work in June to help ISU develop the guidelines for a scholarship program that could fund the studies of additional M.Ed. students (EMP will provide modest funds for this purpose).

As described below, EMP is investigating ways to give potential M.Ed. students access to these funds and will dedicate modest funds to scholarships for the next ISU cohort.



M.Ed. students engaged in small-group discussion about Georgian education.

Increasing Access to the M.Ed. program

EMP is working to leverage project seed funds with the private sector and CSOs to provide scholarships to worthy prospective students. Scholarships will be available for disadvantaged students and those from various regions who meet merit-based requirements. These students will bring a diverse background to the student cohort based on the following criteria: socially vulnerable, orphans, below poverty line, internally displaced people (IDPs), financial need, and those with diverse background from various regions throughout Georgia. It is anticipated that in the fall of 2010, EMP will provide approximately 10 such scholarships.

Preparing faculty. The speed with which the M.Ed. program was launched meant that ISU instructors, some of them relatively inexperienced teachers, had to rise quickly to the challenge of teaching. To ensure they could meet this test, UCLA professors provided professional development seminars and one-on-one support to help them engage in strong instructional practices, course creation, and lesson planning. In addition, UCLA consultants advised ISU instructors on program/course standards and student evaluation indicators that they would follow, thereby providing them the tools for ongoing, continuous improvement. Finally, UCLA staff assessed instructors' individual performance, giving specific, tailored feedback for improvement. In general, UCLA staff found that ISU instructors showed strength in using interactive classroom strategies and bringing in resources from outside the classroom. They are still building their ability to tie students' prior knowledge to their course material and

to draw on students' differing experiences to enhance the learning of all. Overall, this hands-on support has ensured that the instruction and planning of the ISU M.Ed. program is top-notch.

Evaluating the M.Ed. program. EMP has been working with ISU faculty from the beginning to develop their ability to monitor, evaluate, and continually improve the M.Ed. program. As mentioned above, the EMP team conducted a mid-term review of the program in which UCLA professors observed M.Ed. classes, interviewed instructors to identify their challenges and successes, conducted a focus group of students to identify where they thought the program was succeeding or could be improved, and reviewed course reading materials. Based on the outcome of the evaluation, the five first-semester course syllabi were revised. In June, UCLA professors began the first-year review of the M.Ed. program and results will be available during the July reporting period.

While not the direct outcome of an evaluation, UCLA and ISU staff have been discussing the impact of the lack of performance standards for educational leaders in Georgia on program design and potential for impact. For example, without standards to refer to, it has been difficult to plan a well-rounded program for education administrators specifically focused on the Georgian experience. To address this challenge, ISU and EMP have collaborated on developing a shared vision of what ISU is trying to achieve through the M.Ed. Administration program. Building on international performance standards, ISU's M.Ed. program coordinator posted a draft list of competencies on the ISU course web portal. Faculty members, UCLA professors, and EMP staff commented on, discussed, and prioritized these competencies and followed up with a meeting to further drill down into these ideas. This final draft is being used to guide program development and will be revised in the near future to ensure that the program vision is continually updated. In addition, as will be discussed below, school principal standards will be developed by the Ministry in the next year and ISU's competency list will need to be modified to incorporate the new list of standards once finalized.

Creating a lasting partnership between UCLA and ISU. Staff from both universities are interested in pursuing an institutional relationship beyond the life of the EMP project and have begun doing so through the ongoing support provided by UCLA professors to ISU professors. As part of building this relationship, professors and administrators from ISU have planned an observational study tour (funded by EMP and to be implemented during Year 2 of the project) to enable them to interact with a broader range of UCLA staff (including Dean Aimée Dorr of UCLA's Graduate School of Education & Information Studies). The study tour will also enable them to investigate how UCLA manages their master's in education and to meet with working principals to learn the skills they most value in their day-to-day work.

Input 1.2: Short courses in education administration developed for education professionals

EMP began Year 1 expecting principal in-service training would be developed at ISU as a for-fee professional certificate program in education administration. EMP and ISU had begun to define this program, to conceptualize how the university could manage it, and to train professionals from ISU and the broader training community in

a unified course design methodology to implement it. However, the Ministry was not comfortable with ISU as the sole home of this certificate program, preferring to include a range of training providers or to base the training at the MoES itself. After consultation with USAID, the EMP team suggested that the project assist the Ministry in developing principal standards and in creating courses (to be implemented by various training providers) to help principals meet those standards.

Identifying education professionals' needs. In late 2009, to better understand principals' existing capacity gaps, EMP staff conducted an in-depth needs assessment to identify school director capacity to: (1) manage the educational process, and (2) manage resources (human and physical). Through focus groups, EMP staff gathered information about the training needs of school principals, potential course structures, program affordability, and other logistical issues that will affect participation in any new training courses. In total, the project conducted nine focus groups, one in Tbilisi and the rest in eight regions. These focus groups drew participation from 134 school principals in all 10 regions of Georgia, which gave the project strong insight into the needs of administrators. Their primary interests are summarized below.

Exhibit 4. Topics Principals Would Like Covered in Short Courses	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research methods in education • Education policy and legislative basics • Organizational management and school leadership • HR management in education • Quality management process in educational institution • School funding and management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundraising and management projects • Application of information and communication technologies in education • Organization of learning process • Public relations and accountability • Management of material resources and secure school

Training specialists to design in-service courses. In support of effective design for school administrator courses, in February 2010, EMP staff conducted a three-day training with 16 local trainers from both the MoES and ISU on a standardized course design model. Through this training-of-trainers (TOT) session, participants developed institutional guidelines for quality control and analyzed adult learning principles necessary for preparing effective courses. The training included a course manual that described the ADDIE cycle of training delivery (Assess, Design, Develop, Implement, and Evaluate). The TOT session highlighted several training module options to be used to prepare short courses. Several of the trainees from this TOT session continue to be involved in the development of training curriculum for principals despite the broadening of training providers beyond ISU. .

Delivering courses. The MoES and EMP are still discussing who will deliver the courses in the long run. In the past, the Ministry has directly engaged private-sector training firms or relied on donor funding to support these efforts; it is now unclear whether the MoES wants to provide such training itself or through vouchers given to trainees. The Ministry is considering developing regional training facilities to house trainings (to be delivered by the private sector), though final decisions have not been made on these issues.

However, given the pressing needs of principals, EMP and the Ministry agreed to begin a round of training at the beginning of Year 2. The Ministry agreed with working with the Center for Training and Consultancy (CTC) to design and develop a

first round of basic trainings focused on financial management skills. The second round of training (also in Year 2) will be linked to principal standards (after they are developed), and EMP is committed to designing these course and implementing a TOT program for them. During the summer of 2010, EMP will train 350 principals in effective financial management.

Input 1.3: Short courses developed for ERCs that increase their capacity in resource management and administration

Per agreement with USAID, the bulk of activities under this input will be conducted during Year 2 and will only occur after specific ERC policy reforms take place. However, during Year 1, EMP conducted an assessment of previous training and capacity-building activities for ERCs. EMP staff met with staff from the MoES Regional Coordination department to gather details about previous MoES training activities, previous USAID projects, and previous other donor activities, including those of the UNDP. The UNDP was then implementing a program that enables ERC heads (and one other ERC designee) to attend self-selected professional development programs in 2009. These trainings were designed to help ERC staff develop basic skills, but were not specifically linked to performance improvement indicators. EMP plans to use this information as well as the results of its ERC capacity study to inform design of ERC short courses in Year 2.

Input 1.4: Research topics established with input from the Ministry for consideration by M.Ed. students

EMP's original plan was to align ISU M.Ed. students' thesis research with specific MoES interests. However, because the MoES did not see the need for such a formal link with the ISU program, EMP revised this plan. Instead of students' research being based on a formal link between ISU and the Ministry proper, EMP is working with ISU to link student action research and thesis topics to the actual problems of schools and other educational institutions. The goal is to guide students in applying theory to practice through the practicum stream and linking this work with practical education research skills that will allow student to conduct basic action research in practical settings and competently consume a variety of research (both domestic and international) that will inform their practice as future educational leaders. These links are reflected in the practicum handbook and the thesis guidelines developed by UCLA for EMP.

Output 2: Regulatory and Policy Environment Strengthened

Apart from trained and capable managers of its education system (i.e., school principals and ERC staff), Georgia needs the policy and other infrastructure in place to ensure that (1) the Ministry can properly monitor (and adjust if needed) education quality for all Georgian children and (2) Georgian parents have the means to monitor and shape education outcomes for their children. To achieve these goals, EMP is supporting the Ministry to (1) develop a funding formula that provides equitable education to all Georgian students given each community's particular circumstances, (2) identify ways to empower ERCs to support schools effectively and communicate to principals the standards that guide their expected performance, and (3) develop a way to effectively collect and communicate information about school performance

(student, financial, scholastic, etc.) so that the MoES can make data-driven decisions about how to promote education quality throughout the system. Finally (and fourth), EMP is seeking effective ways for communities to engage with their schools and boards of trustees to ensure they can both help promote as well as shape high-quality education for their children.

Input 2.1: School financial capacity strengthened

Currently, many Georgian schools are unable to operate using the funding allocated to them according to the Ministry's existing funding formula, since the true costs of educating a child in — for example — a small, mountain school district and a large Tbilisi school are not equivalent, since the latter benefits from economies of scale. As a result, many schools operate on deficit funding, some years as many as 50 percent. To address this problem, during Year 1, EMP consultants assessed existing school financing problems, identified the causes of those problems, and provided recommendations on potential funding formula structures. EMP also worked closely with the MoES to update its budget planning and expenditure reporting system, which schools and ERCs will use to collect/report financial data for EMIS.

Assessing funding formula and recommending improvements. In this past year, EMP consultant Dori Nielson reviewed proposed models of financing (including two funding simulators) and conducted further research to identify their full range of possible consequences. Dr. Nielson also met with several members of the Ministry as well as ERC finance specialists in order to understand their concerns related to formula revision as well as the challenges they face in implementing any funding formula. After completing her research, Dr. Nielson identified challenges facing Georgia's funding formula (see table below) and recommended changes and a path forward to enact them.

Exhibit 5. Challenges Facing Georgia's Current Funding Formula
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ongoing deficit funding.</i> Georgia's current funding formula anticipated that some underfunded schools would need to request additional funds to meet their needs, but the numbers receiving additional funding rose to more than 50 percent of the schools.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>No recognition of economies of scale related to school size.</i> A wide range of school sizes exists within each geographic category of mountain, rural, and urban.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Iterative application of the formula without grounding in sufficient data.</i> The current process requires multiple recalculations throughout the year, requiring significant staff time and invalidating budgeting and planning. Few records of revenues and expenditures exist to provide analysis of education expenditures or evaluate a funding formula.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The need for initial and ongoing training for personnel involved in the distribution and use of the funds.</i> Many personnel at several levels were affected by the major change in the method of funding education. The intense training required has been difficult to achieve.

After discussion of various components that could be included in the funding formula, the Ministry decided that it wanted per-pupil funding that includes an additional base related to the cost required by all schools to remain open, regardless of size. In March, the MoES also made clear that — because of the various problems associated with the current deficit-funding scheme — the Ministry was making review of the funding a priority for this year's budgeting cycle in order to implement it for the 2011 year. Under the current scheme, schools have no ability to manage their budgets and no

accountability for what they actually do budget. Not only is the process for requesting deficit funding time-consuming for both schools and the Ministry (schools fill out detailed requests for extra funding that is then thoroughly reviewed by the Ministry: more than 1,000 school request funding in a few months), but it also creates an incentive for schools to outspend their budgets because they know that deficit funding is available.

To help the MoES weigh various possible revisions to the formula, Dr. Nielson created a school finance structures and mechanisms document, which was presented to the Ministry in May 2010. This document lays out six models of funding formulas as well as recommendations regarding which ones would be most effective given the specific circumstances in Georgia. Based on the Ministry's interest in per-pupil funding that includes a foundational base (as described above), EMP is using the structures and mechanisms document to lay out the implications of this funding choice as well as the administrative/legislative changes that might be required to administer/manage the new formula to ensure that it remain effective for years to come. The Ministry expects to make a decision on its preferred revised formula by the end of the summer.

Assessing school financial management and recommending improvements. Though this activity was originally planned for Year 2, it quickly became evident that the MoES needed assistance to review its current financial management process for schools in parallel with funding formula research and design. To further the formula review process, EMP staff gathered disparate electronic and paper-based data to create a comprehensive database that includes information on all schools in Georgia disaggregated by region, rayon, school name, school code, school type, and legal status and records voucher amounts, school revenues, and school expenditures for 2008 and 2009. The database has proven very useful in identifying how funding is allocated, disbursed, and expended, and is being used to test possible revised funding formulas.

In addition, EMP staff conducted an analysis of Georgian law and curricular requirements that drive educational costs. Staff reviewed decrees and governmental regulations related to teachers (salaries, teaching hours, etc.) and the student voucher (size and distribution). Staff also reviewed the national curriculum. After analyzing their findings, the EMP team is now incorporating all this information into formula development and policy reform recommendations. During the summer, EMP will work with the School Finance working group to finalize these recommendations for consideration by MoES' top management.

Finally, to improve the MoES' ability (and schools' ability) to plan more effectively, EMP recommended that the Ministry develop a more unified school financial reporting system. As one step towards such a system, EMP staff, in collaboration with MoES, developed an expenditure report/budget plan form that schools will use to submit information to the Ministry. The new school expenditure/budget database (part of the database portfolio discussed under Input 2.3 below) is based on this EMP-developed form and will allow schools to submit — and the Ministry to review — annual school budgets (including state vouchers and other income) and quarterly/annual school expenditures. These new forms are being piloted in two

Tbilisi schools and will be revised and updated if needed before being put into broader use when the expenditure database is completed at the end of the summer.

Input 2.2: Decentralized management systems empowered through greater responsibilities of ERCs and/or other regional-level education units of the GoG in education planning and management

ERC empowerment and effectiveness is seen as one of the key elements of education decentralization. These bodies, along with schools themselves, play an important role in ensuring that the local capacity to manage reform is in place so that — when accountability is delegated to the local level — Georgia can take full advantage of the benefits and opportunities inherent in its decentralized system. However, without improved ERC capacity to facilitate local education management and without a mechanism to hold the schools accountable for their decision-making, the government of Georgia's decentralization reform strategy is at risk. Therefore, investigating the role and effectiveness of ERCs as the Ministry's key local representative was the core of EMP's first-year activity under this input. In addition, the MoES has begun to develop performance standards for school principals in order to have a tool to indicate and measure the expectations for their performance.

To assess ERC performance, EMP undertook an ERC performance study based on the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)'s loci of decision-making methodology in order to analyze accountability and where decisions for a set of key education functions were made. This study evaluated ERC performance, the gaps between policies governing ERCs and actual practice, and perceptions of



Members of ERCs participating in focus groups to assess ERCs' understanding of their role in the Georgian system and the effectiveness in achieving their goals.

ERC staff regarding their role in managing the education system. The goal of this analysis is to help the MoES clarify how it can empower ERCs to strengthen the Ministry's presence in districts and to give schools the support they need to operate effectively in a decentralized system. To gather data, EMP consultants:

- held 27 focus groups (four groups per region, except in Tbilisi, where seven groups were held) with principals, teachers, board of trustee members, and ERC staff,
- conducted one interview per region with the local authority responsible for school renovation, and
- distributed the adapted OECD questionnaire to ERC heads (who were not part of the focus groups) and MoES Regional Coordination staff.

The focus group sites were selected based on input from the MoES and EMP staff to ensure proper representation of urban, rural, and mountain schools, as well as regional diversity (including ethnic minorities).

In May 2010, EMP presented the initial findings from the study to the MoES, which found that while ERCs provide many useful, even necessary tasks, these tasks are not well suited to fostering accountability and thereby to improving educational outcomes. The table below describes the study's recommendations for ways to address this situation for consideration by the MoES.

Exhibit 6. Summary of Recommendations from the ERC Performance Study	
•	Use school report cards (SRCs) to improve accountability of the school system
•	Empower ERCs to oversee and support school budgeting
•	Designate ERCs to support and oversee functions of the school Boards of Trustees (BoTs) and foster parental participation
•	Charge ERCs with monitoring and supporting human resource management processes
•	Clarify the role of ERC staff as designated by the MoES

Developing principal standards. As mentioned above, improving principals' skills is central to the challenge of advancing school-level autonomy and strengthening education management. The MoES has staked a great deal of the success of its decentralization policies on school principals' ability to manage instruction and finance, and to provide leadership to teachers and communities. The next step for the MoES is to develop the means to communicate to school leaders what is expected of them, what competencies they must master, and how they will be held accountable. Doing so will be a key step toward aligning school performance with national objectives for the Georgian education system.



Members of the MoES exploring different options for Georgian principal standards.

In June, an EMP consultant began research and discussions with a working group composed of MoES staff. The working group began looking at the needs of Georgia's education system, thinking about where accountability was most needed, and to think more broadly about how to use performance standards to drive desired education outcomes. The consultant also spoke with school principals and ERC staff and concluded that principals do not currently exercise the authority they already possess in key areas of school leadership (for a variety of reasons). For example, principals (1) rarely dismiss poor teachers, (2) do not identify or reward good teachers, (3) seldom

allow teachers to decide how many hours they will teach, and (4) view themselves as blameless if their school is running as a “deficit” school. To address some of these omissions, the EMP consultant suggested that the MoES design standards focused on the issues listed below. EMP will support the Ministry in developing standards over the rest of the remaining calendar year.

Exhibit 7. Proposed Focus of School Principal Performance Standards	
•	Faculty and staff management
•	Budgeting, school finances, and business management
•	Operating in a marketplace where families are free to choose their children’s school
•	Quality of instruction and improvement of teaching (e.g., educational/pedagogical expertise)
•	Management, maintenance, and procurement of facilities, materials, and supplies
•	Knowledge of education law and related legal requirements
•	Relationship with community, parents, and boards of trustees
•	Ethics and values

Input 2.3: EMIS further developed to provide data for decision makers

Starting with the SIS. Given the limited EMIS-related technical infrastructure and human resources in place at the Ministry at project start, the MoES and EMP agreed to begin building the Ministry’s EMIS from a foundational Student Information (SIS) module. The SIS will collect, consolidate, and disaggregate accurate student information so that MoES decision makers are better informed of the actual circumstances of students and schools. Specifically, it will collect data related to registration, scheduling, attendance, grading, and other basic information related to schools and teachers. EMP formed the EMIS Working Group, composed of Ministry personnel, to advise on the development of the SIS to ensure it meets Ministry needs. In April 2010, EMP and the MoES signed an MOU detailing the responsibility of each party with regard to building the SIS and affirming a mutual commitment to the success of the SIS.

After some delays related to the change in ministries, at the beginning of 2010, the project competed a subcontract to build the SIS and train Ministry personnel to use it. Delta Systems was the successful offeror. In collaboration with the Working Group, EMP staff and Delta Systems personnel have finalized the technical specifications of the new SIS module, which will focus on five key areas: registration, scheduling, attendance, grading, and report generation. Business-process diagrams have been created for different educational processes in accordance with the discussions with the MoES working group and consensus reached on the themes listed in the text box at right. Delta Systems

Business Process Diagrams Completed

- Student registration, student card
- Student migration and dismissal
- Student movement from class to class
- Autumn exams
- School personnel
- Student “joining up” in classes
- Class-master and teachers
- Compilation of subjects’ list per schools
- Class rooms, development of lessons schedule
- Attendance registration
- Grade registration, electronic journal
- Other program-related information

expects to complete the SIS software by the end of September, after which it will pilot the SIS in up to 20 schools and four ERCs; develop relevant manuals; provide training in SIS applications to the MoES, schools, and ERCs and finalize the software by the first week of January 2011. It is anticipated that in the spring and summer 2011, that the ministry will expand the pilot to all 2,500+ schools and 65+ ERCs; complete data import; and be ready for the system to be fully functioning by the end of fiscal year 2011.

Adding the database portfolio. In response to the Minister's request for reliable basic school data, the IT Department crafted a solution that can provide such data in advance of the completion of the SIS and later more sophisticated EMIS modules. The department proposed a portfolio of databases to collect, verify, and consolidate school data.

Seizing the Moment to Promote Multiple Project Goals

Initially, the database portfolio covered only the first five topics listed in the table below, and did not include a school budget and expenditure element. After discussions between EMP staff and the Ministry's IT and Economics departments, the MoES decided to include this database. Doing so is a key step toward future success in developing a new funding formula. With data on school expenditures (linked to student and school data), the MoES will be able to plan future formula adjustments more accurately. Together, the SIS and database portfolio will provide the MoES with improved access to data, thus improving their ability to make better informed policy decisions.

With USAID approval, EMP agreed to support this ministerial initiative both financially and technically given the benefits the MoES can derive. As is detailed in the MOU signed between the MoES and EMP in March 2010, both parties agree to contribute 30,000 GEL (~USD 17, 400) to getting the database portfolio up and running. The database system will be designed to mesh with the SIS to create a coordinated data platform upon which the MoES can build when it is ready for additional modules.

Exhibit 8. Elements of Database Portfolio

Student Information Database will capture student name, sex, ID number, school ID code, date of birth, and citizenship.

School Card Database will capture information about public and private schools: basic school parameters, contact information, bank details, school specifics and number of shifts, information about teachers and administrative personnel, major teaching language and sector, educational study groups, laboratories and computer hardware.

School Principals Database will capture data on school principals or principals in charge, including name, ID number, contact details, status (elected, appointed, principal in charge).

School Board of Trustees Database will capture information about past, current, assigned, and elected BOT members, including name, ID number, year joined BOT, and expiry date.

ERC Database will capture data about ERCs and staff, including name, contact details of the ERC and staff, ID numbers, position and mobile phone numbers of staff.

School Budget and Expenditures Database will capture information on a school's annual budget (state vouchers and other income) and quarterly/annual expenditures.

After a public request for quotations, the database portfolio procurement was awarded to Delta Systems. Delta Systems will also train MoES officials to train future users

and to transfer data from existing MoES digital and paper-based tracking systems. To date, Delta system has finalized the database technical specifications; created the basic framework of the system; completed the system administrative database module and tested it; presented the system administrative module to the MoES; completed, tested, and presented the school card module; and started development of the student card module. The database portfolio is expected to be completed and operational by August 1, 2010.

Input 2.4: Accreditation standards developed

EMP has received a stop-work order from USAID on this input, and we are working with USAID to modify our contract to remove work on accreditation standards.

Input 2.5: System established for increased dialogue between MoES and non-school actors regarding reforms and quality of education

EMP's original vision for this input was to build more effective communication between the Ministry and civil society actors regarding education issues. However, after meeting with multiple civil society stakeholders — e.g., parliamentary and non-parliamentary opposition members, the representatives of Free Professional Union of Teachers and Scientists, the Union of Professional Education and Training Qualified Workforce, the Independent Professional Union of Students, the Education Professional Syndicate, and the League of Education leaders — the MoES created a Public Board to address communication needs with civil society and therefore felt that the problem EMP's activities intended to address no longer was an issue.

Therefore, EMP staff began exploring other ways to support the MoES' grassroots engagement with civil society and communities and drafted a school-community participation pilot small grants program concept note designed to demonstrate successful approaches to community mobilization and fundraising. The draft proposes to help the Ministry — and the General Education Development Division in particular — to develop systems and procedures to encourage schools to find ways to engage non-education actors, such as communities, local governments, and local businesses. The MoES has read the draft concept paper, agreed to move forward with the program, and is considering whether it can provide cost-sharing. Since the grant pool is small, the Ministry has asked EMP to limit competition to geographically isolated areas. EMP has submitted a contract modification request to USAID that would enable it to award and manage grants.